

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-10 LAB-06

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 OPR-02 OC-06 CCO-00 SPC-03

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 L-03 NSC-10 PA-03 PRS-01 SS-15

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R 021710Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3686

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ROME

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PLAB

SUBJECT: RAIL AND PUBLIC SERVICE STRIKES SCHEDULED EARLY OCTOBER

1. SUMMARY: CGT AND CFDT IN EFFORT TO REFOCUS LABOR ACTION ON NATIONAL SCALE HAVE CALLED FOR REGION-BY-REGION RAIL STRIKE OCTOBER 2-6, AND FOR 24-HOUR NATIONWIDE STRIKE IN PUBLIC SERVICES OCTOBER 11. RANK-AND-FILE RESPONSES LIKELY TO BE BETTER THAN USUAL, GIVEN SOLID BREAD-AND-BUTTER WAGE ISSUE AND UNCOMPROMISING GOF ATTITUDE. END SUMMARY.

2. CGT AND CFDT ON OCTOBER 1 SET SUCCESSIVE, REGION-BY-REGION RAIL STRIKES EXTENDING OVER PERIOD OCTOBER 2-6. THESE TWO UNIONS - NEITHER OF WHICH IS SIGNATORY TO 1973 SNCF WAGE AGREEMENT SIGNED BY FO, CFTC, CGC AND AUTONOMOUS UNIONS - ARE DEMANDING HIGHER WAGES (ADDITIONAL 4 PERCENT), SHORTER HOURS, AND BETTER WORKING ONDITIONS. SNCF DIRECTOR GENERAL REFUSES TO REOPEN NEGOTIATIONS. IN ABSENCE OF CHANGE IN DIRECTOR'S

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POSITION, CGT/CFDT TO MEET AGAIN OCTOBER 5 TO CONSIDER

FURTHER ACTION.

3. SAME TWO UNIONS ALSO LEAD IN PLANNING ACTION IN PUBLIC SECTOR. A 24-HOUR NATIONWIDE STRIKE OF PUBLIC SERVANTS, POSTAL, SANITARY, AND PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE WORKERS HAS BEEN CALLED BY CGT/CFDT FOR OCTOBER 11. FORCE OUVRIERE, FEN (EDUCATION), CFTC, CGC, AND AUTONOMOUS UNIONS HAVE ALSO GIVEN NOTICE OF INTENT TO STRIKE PUBLIC SERVICES DURING PERIOD OCTOBER 8-13. ELECTRICITY AND GAS SERVICES ARE SCHEDULED TO BE STRUCK OCTOBER 10. DEMANDS IN PUBLIC SECTOR VARY ACCORDING TO ACTIVITY, BUT RUN GENERALLY TO WAGES AND WORKING CONDITIONS. CGT AND CFDT ARE DEMANDING 6 PERCENT WAGE INCREASE FROM OCTOBER 1, AND MINIMUM STARTING WAGE OF 1200 FRANCS (\$280) A MONTH.

4. COMMENT: TOGETHER, CGT AND CFDT CLAIM TO REPRESENT 80 PERCENT OF SNCF WORKFORCE. GIVEN STAND-PAT POSITION OF MANAGEMENT, THE PROPOSED STRIKE COULD RESULT IN CONSIDERABLE DISRUPTION OVER EXTENDED PERIOD. UNIONS PLAYING IT SAFE IN LEAVING LOCALS FREE TO COMPLY AS THEY SEE FIT. SOLID BREAD-AND-BUTTER ISSUE ON WHICH CALL BASED MAY, HOWEVER, IN COMATE OF RISING PRICES - REVEAL A RANK-AND-FILE MILITANCY NOT ALWAYS EVIDENT IN CGT-CFDT ENDEAVORS. SIMILARLY, WORKER SENTIMENT IN PUBLIC SERVICES (WHERE CGT-CFDT LESS STRONG) ALSO RUNNING HIGH, WITH CLAIMED NET DECREASE IN PURCHASING POWER IN 1973. TOUGH 1973 AGREEMENT SIGNED BY FO, FEN, CFTC, CGC AND AUTONOMOUS UNIONS PROVIDE FOR 2 PERCENT GUARANTEED INCREASE IN REAL WAGES REDEEMABLE AT YEAR'S END, SIGNATORY UNIONS ARGUE, WITH GOOD REASON, THAT EROSION OF PURCHASING POWER JUSTIFIES IMMEDIATE ADJUSTMENT. WHILE UNOFFICIALLY GOF OFFICIALS AGREE, GOVERNMENT THUS FAR HAS INSISTED ON OBSERVANCE OF LETTER OF AGREEMENT.

5. ANXIOUS TO REFOCUS TRADE UNION ACTION FROM LIP TO WIDER NATIONAL SCENE, MAIRE (CFDT) AND SEGUY (CGT) ARE SHOWING SURE INSTINCT FOR THE SOFT SPOTS. GOF RELUCTANCE TO RESPOND TO SIGNATORY UNIONS' DEMANDS ABOVE PLAYS INTO CFDT-CGT HANDS.
IRWIN

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